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REPORTAGE OF MATERNAL MORTALITY IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the reportage of "Maternal Mortality" in Nigerian newspapers within the year 2009. The major focus of this study is to assess the role of the Nigerian press in creating awareness of and/or enlightening the Nigerian public on the subject matter. Content analysis was the study design employed for objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of the print media in this study. A total of 47 reports on maternal health issues were harvested from three newspapers- The Guardian, The Punch and Nigerian Tribune- chosen for the study. Data in this study were presented in tables and percentages were used for analysis. The units of analysis for the study comprised editorials, features, opinions, news, pictures, illustrations, advertorials and interviews. Most of the reports on maternal mortality in the selected Nigerian newspapers, within the study period, had a favourable coverage but were not projected in forms i.e. editorials and interviews that would enhance the salience of the subject matter- maternal mortality.

Keywords: Coverage, health communication, media, maternal health aspects, maternal mortality

Introduction

Going by available statistics on Nigeria's health indicators, the issue of maternal health appears to be one of the worst rated. An estimated figure of 50,000 Nigerian women are recorded to die annually as a result of pregnancy and childbirth complications, thus accounting for ten per cent (i.e. 10%) of estimated global maternal deaths. "Nigeria also accounts for 20% of global estimates of abortion-related deaths, and 40% of obstetric fistulas.... Primary prevention includes intense public health advocacy and communication strategies to create accurate knowledge on issues related to maternal health, and the promotion of increased use of contraception by women (and men) to space childbirth" ("*Maternal Health in Nigeria*," 2006).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Availability of accurate, up-to-date, reliable and relevant health data... is essential for strengthening and managing the health system. Currently, there is paucity of relevant health data for policy decision and planning (*The National Health System and Its Management*, 2006). It is no sufficient solution to generate relevant health data for policy decision and planning but what is of utmost importance is *the need to examine the performance of the sources of such relevant health data*. Direct contact, where possible, can be made with the various sources of health data to access firsthand evidence of their occupations, official designations, research findings and practical experiences thus affirming the credibility, reliability and competence of health communication sources as well as ensuring health reports are indeed factual, accurate and up-to-date.

The portrayal of maternal mortality in the Nigerian print media can determine the attention or lack of attention paid to the issue by the general (African) public and the Nigerian public in particular. Proper enlightenment on maternal mortality, in the print media, would help the Nigerian and other African leaders create the right platform for dealing with the crisis now and in the future.

JUSTIFICATION

The media, for the purpose of demystifying the subject matter, is competent enough to, and can actually kick-start a debate on maternal mortality. However, the study would portray the true state of the Nigerian print media as regards how they deal with the subject of maternal mortality. "Message contents in mass media are expected to be abstractions from reality. They are to be microcosms of sorts" (Folarin, 1998).

Analyzing newspaper content(s) on topical issues such as maternal health is necessary for various reasons. One such purpose for a study of this nature is that of generating reliable data that will enable people in authority within a country (like Nigeria) to make fundamental decisions, in a timely manner, which would promote effective action or sound policy formulation on issues such as maternal health. The mass media are not expected to downplay the importance of factors that determine the country's positive or negative development, which include indicators such as health, by failing to set such topical issues, such as maternal health, as the agenda for discussion. By setting maternal health issues, for instance maternal mortality as the public agenda, the mass media would create a platform for their audience to give attention to such an issue so as to come up with relevant solutions as soon as possible.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study, generated from the research questions used for data analysis/discussion, include to:

1. Explore the frequency of maternal health coverage in the selected Nigerian newspapers.
2. Investigate the maternal health aspect with the highest frequency in the selected Nigerian newspapers.
3. Determine the prominence given to maternal health issues in the selected Nigerian newspapers.
4. Ascertain the slant of maternal health reportage in the selected Nigerian newspapers.
5. Explore the sources of maternal health reports in the selected Nigerian newspapers.
6. Investigate maternal mortality challenges/causes reported in the selected Nigerian newspapers.
7. Ascertain the forms of maternal health coverage in the selected Nigerian newspapers.
8. Determine the source category of maternal health issues in the selected Nigerian newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Oyeniran (2009:12), citing the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) consultant on HIVAIDS- Dr. Tajudeen Akerele, remarks that as far as maternal mortality is concerned, Nigeria ranks 9th in the world. He also observes that "one in every nine maternal deaths worldwide occurs in Nigeria alone." Although corruption, as claimed by some, can cause maternal mortality/morbidity rates to be inflated and/or exaggerated, one cannot totally rule out the fact that the rates remain high. Various causes associated with the high rate of maternal mortality and morbidity in Nigeria, including factors such as negligence on the part of maternal health workers, have been identified at one time or the other. Schoenbach et al (2005) acknowledge printed newspapers for their ability to widen the range of public topics, events and issues their audience is aware of. They also recognize that printed newspapers improve readers' knowledge on occurrences around them and that newspaper reading raises awareness of more public affairs topics than other information channels.

Printed newspapers serve a significant function for the public agenda in that they broaden the knowledge base of the public who have limited varieties of interest. Osadolor (2001), cited in Orhewere & Kur (2004), notes that media influence can be positive or negative based on the images conveyed, the stories filtered, the interpretations and signposts provided as well as the angle and direction in which events are mirrored. Orhewere & Kur (2004) are of the view that responsible media practice is one in which the media ensure their reports are void of inaccuracies, distortions, confusion, error of facts, etc. They see balance, objectivity, and accuracy as hallmarks of sound journalism that must be observed for responsible reporting.

Theoretical Framework

Of relevance to this study are the theoretical concepts of framing, social responsibility, agenda-setting, second-level agenda and object salience. The second-level agenda and object salience, however, is at the core of its theoretical framework.

Entman (2002) describes the framing theory as one premised basically on *selection* and *salience*. He observes that framing involves selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text in order to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral

evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the subject of discussion. Here, events of interest to the media are placed within a field of meaning thus giving direction to the audience on how to think about a given agenda.

Under the framing theory, it is crucial that the media provide a framing paradigm that would serve as a guide to enable the audience pick up the right messages from maternal mortality media reports. Entman (2002) posits that content analysis, though it yields data, tends to misrepresent media messages picked up by a majority of audience members when unguided by a framing paradigm.

Part of the provisions for the social responsibility theory, is the ability of the media to raise conflict to the plane of discussion via their information, entertainment, and sales. Okunna (2002) opines that the derailment of the press into negativity necessitated the postulates of the social responsibility theory which aimed at matching freedom with obligation to society. At the core of social responsibility is public interest whereas liberty and restraint are the watchwords. The Nigerian print media are obliged to assume their responsibility of reporting the intricacies of maternal mortality as appropriate (i.e. reflecting in their messages truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance) so that the audience would make informed decisions. It is expected that individuals see to it that the Nigerian print media do not avoid carrying out their duty as expected so that they are not found wanting.

Mboho (2004) would describe agenda setting as the topics presented to the audience by the media and the manner in which information on such topics is presented. The agenda setting theory, as Antigha (2005) rightly puts it, portrays a close relationship between how issues are presented by the news media and the importance the target audience accord such issues. Folarin (1998) believes the mass media pre-determine issues of importance per time in any society. The media are said to force attention to particular issues. They are not only consistent in presenting objects, they also suggest what individuals ought to think about, know about and/or have some feeling about.

Readers are said to learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to such an issue based on the amount of information in a news story and its position. In relation to the subject matter of this discourse, an application of agenda setting by media operators implies that the frequent selection and prominent display of stories on maternal mortality will provoke public discussion of same (i.e. maternal mortality), which may invariably influence government to align its health policies as appropriate. Featuring the poor state of health facilities (which is one of the causes of maternal mortality), for instance, on the front and back pages of newspapers or in the form of editorials on a regular basis could engender government to embark on the renovation/restructuring and/or creation of its own health facilities to better serve the interest of everyone, especially the womenfolk. Health policies would have been designed to foster the implementation of such community development projects.

Empirical work from the perspective of the second-level agenda and object salience, primarily concerned with the transfer of issue salience from the mass media to the public, has proven that modifications in media salience influenced perceived public salience as well as public attitudes. Such analyses have investigated the relationship between media attention toward objects in the news and public attitude toward those particular (or similar) objects. What really matters, under the second-level agenda and object salience theory, is not whether maternal health issues are being covered by the Nigerian print media or not but how maternal health issues are projected in the Nigerian press while setting them as the agenda for the public. What way and manner do the Nigerian print media cover maternal mortality so as to successfully achieve the goal of making it a subject for society to think about? Fundamental issues that need to be identified for discussion to sustain the debate on maternal mortality include causes of maternal mortality, state of health facilities, health, governmental agenda on health development, health sector budgetary allocation, as well as the attitude of medical personnel to and individual patronage of standard healthcare.

Promoting national debate on maternal mortality is not strictly a media affair, hence, a need for the print media to join forces with designated health officials and communities with high mortality rates. The print media, little as it may seem, can rev up their routine activities by creating special columns in their publications for government officials such as the Commissioner for Health, the Minister of Health, and even the Local Government Chairman of any state concerned to enlighten the public on measures being taken to eradicate or minimize the rate of maternal mortality in the society. They may also need to attach

photographs of prominent individuals in the state to reports on health matters (i.e. maternal mortality) to enhance their credibility and enable the audience easily identify with the media messages packaged in such reports. Print media news on maternal mortality should not be in the straight news format most of the time but also in the interpretative or investigative format. They need to also make reports on critical subjects such as maternal mortality appear less on the inside pages and more on other pages of their publications. This would go a long way to positively affecting the salience of maternal mortality coverage in the Nigerian print media.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Content analysis is the study design employed in this study. The population of this study constitutes Nigerian newspapers. Three Nigerian dailies- *The Guardian*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Punch*- were selected as members of the study population. The names of the twelve months of the year were written on pieces of paper and were separated into four places (representing the four quarters of the year). The first quarter comprised the months of January, February and March; the second quarter comprised the months of April, May and June; the third quarter comprised the months of July, August and September; the fourth quarter comprised the months of October, November and December. After reshuffled contents of each quarter arrangements in separate containers, the researcher used the simple random sampling technique to pick one ballot paper from each of the four quarter arrangements and eventually arrived at March, April, September and December.

These generated a population size of 366 issues for the four months (i.e. March, April, September & December) under study, of which 60 issues served as the sample size (i.e. 15 issues per each selected newspaper) based on the systematic sampling technique. The researcher did a simple ballot with all the dates for the four months under study. One date, after vigorously reshuffling in a closed-lid container, was picked. The date picked turned out to be an even number which implied the researcher would analyze all newspaper issues with an even figure for each month; this further balloting was done to aid better management and quality analysis of data gathered within the stipulated period of the research.

The content categories include newspaper, genre, source, report category, frequency, slant, story aspect, placement, and maternal health challenges/causes. The months under study were randomly selected. The researcher's selection of *The Guardian*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Punch* amongst other Nigerian newspapers was purposive based on the fact that these newspapers are popular national dailies and are known for reporting a great deal of health matters and they were readily available and accessible for use by the researcher within the slated time-frame of the study. Data in this study were presented in tables and percentages were used for analysis. The coding sheet served as the research instrument for this study. The units of analysis for the study comprised editorials, features, opinions, news, pictures, illustrations, advertorials and interviews.

Coding Procedure

Below is the coding procedure for the research:

1. Newspaper

1. Guardian 2009
2. Punch 2009
3. Tribune 2009

The following dates were sampled for the study: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, and 30.

2. Genre

1. News- This covers newspaper items such as news briefs and interpretative reports asides general straight news stories on maternal health issues.
2. Feature/Opinion (FO)
3. Editorial
4. Picture/Illustration (PI)
5. Advertorial/Interview (AI)

3. Source

1. Health Practitioner/Personal Source (HPPS)
2. Health Body/NGO (HBNGO)
3. Media Practitioner (MP)
4. News Agency/Internet (NAI)
5. Unidentified Source (US)

4. Source Category

1. Local source
2. Foreign source
3. Unidentified

5. Monthly Report Frequency

1. March
2. April
3. September
4. December

6. Slant

1. Favourable- Reports that present the subject matter in a comprehensive manner, thus, providing sufficient information that would be beneficial to the reader(s); maternal health issues are presented such that the reader(s) can have adequate background information to enable them take a stand on related areas of concern.
2. Neutral- Emphasis is not made on maternal health issues and, thus, does not necessarily prompt any action from the audience; maternal health issues are given a balanced coverage without concentration on either the negative or positive side of such issues.
3. Unfavourable- The slant is considered negative when reports on the subject matter are presented in a scanty manner, thus, not driving home a message that would be beneficial to the reader(s); maternal health issues are not presented such that the reader(s) can have adequate background information to enable them take a stand on related areas of concern.

7. Story Aspect

1. Maternal Mortality (MMORT)
2. Maternal Morbidity (MMORB)
3. Mother & Child Healthcare (MCH)

8. Placement

1. Front Page (FP) - Reports featuring on the 1st three pages of the newspaper publication.
2. Back Page (BP) - Reports featuring on the last three pages of the newspaper publication.
3. Centre Spread (CS) - Reports found on the middle pages of the newspaper publication.
4. Inside Page (IP) - Reports found on the remaining pages of the newspaper publication.

9. Maternal Health Challenges/Causes

1. HIV/AIDS
2. Eclampsia
3. Abortion
4. Infertility
5. Obstetric Fistula (OF)
6. Sepsis
7. Chronic Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (CPID)
8. Postpartum Hemorrhage/Infection (PHI)
9. Prolonged Obstructed Labour (POL)
10. Ectopic Pregnancy (EP)
11. Malaria
12. Anaemia

13. Kidney/Heart/Lung/Liver Disease (KHLLD)
14. Poverty
15. Information Deficiency/Illiteracy (LII)
16. Others – This refers to other related maternal mortality challenges/causes.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1

What is the frequency of maternal health coverage in selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY OF MATERNAL HEALTH ISSUES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Year 2009	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	Total (%)
March	2 (20%)	3 (16.7%)	5 (26.3%)	10 (21.3%)
April	1 (10%)	6 (33.3%)	6 (31.6%)	13 (27.7%)
September	2 (20%)	5 (27.8%)	5 (26.3%)	12 (25.5%)
December	5 (50%)	4 (22.2%)	3 (15.8%)	12 (25.5%)
Total (%)	10 (100%)	18 (100%)	19 (100%)	47 (100%)

A grand total of 47 maternal health reports were harvested from the three newspapers- *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune*- within the study timeframe. Maternal health reports amounted to a total of 10 in *The Guardian*, 18 in *The Punch* and 19 in *Nigerian Tribune*. *The Guardian* recorded its least coverage (i.e. 10%) of maternal health issues in April while its highest coverage (i.e. 50%) was recorded in December. *The Punch* recorded its least coverage (i.e. 16.7%) of maternal health issues in March while its highest coverage (i.e. 33.3%) was recorded in April. *Nigerian Tribune* recorded its least coverage (i.e. 15.8%) of maternal health issues in December while its highest coverage (i.e. 31.6%) was recorded in April.

Research Question 2

Which of the maternal health aspects has the highest frequency in selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 2: MATERNAL HEALTH ASPECT WITH HIGHEST FREQUENCY IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

<i>Nigerian Tribune</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
MMORT	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	4 (21.1%)
MMORB	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	3 (15.8%)
MCH	2 (40%)	6 (100%)	1 (20%)	3 (100%)	12 (63.1%)
Total (%)	5 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	19 (100%)

In all three selected Nigerian newspapers, the maternal health aspect with the highest frequency is MCH (i.e. 63.8%) with MMORB (i.e. 12.8%) having the least frequency.

Research Question 3

What prominence is given to maternal health aspects in selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 3: PLACEMENT OF MATERNAL HEALTH REPORTS IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Table 3.1 - Placement of Maternal Health Reports

<i>The Guardian</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Front Page (FP)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Back Page (BP)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Centre Spread (CS)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Inside Page (IP)	2 (100%)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)
Total (%)	2 (100%)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)

The Guardian recorded all its maternal health reports for the months of March, April, September and December on the inside pages i.e. 100% across-the-board.

Table 3.2 - Placement of Maternal Health Reports

<i>The Punch</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Front Page (FP)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Back Page (BP)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Centre Spread (CS)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Inside Page (IP)	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	4 (100%)	18 (100%)
Total (%)	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	4 (100%)	18 (100%)

The Punch also recorded all its maternal health reports for the months of March, April, September and December on the inside pages i.e. 100% across-the-board.

Table 3.3 - Placement of Maternal Health Reports

<i>Nigerian Tribune</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Front Page (FP)	2 (40%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (21.1%)
Back Page (BP)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Centre Spread (CS)	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	3 (15.8%)
Inside Page (IP)	3 (60%)	3 (50%)	3 (60%)	3 (100%)	12 (63.1%)
Total (%)	5 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	19 (100%)

Nigerian Tribune recorded most of its maternal health reports for the months of March, April, and September on the inside pages (i.e. 60%, 50% and 60% respectively) and all (i.e. 100%) were recorded on the inside pages in December.

Out of the 47 maternal health reports in the three selected Nigerian newspapers, majority (i.e. 85.1%) were found on the inside pages, 8.5% on the front pages, 6.4% on the centre spreads and none (i.e. 0%) on the back pages, within the study period.

Research Question 4

What is the slant of maternal health coverage in selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 4: SLANT OF MATERNAL HEALTH REPORTS IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Table 4.1 – Slant of Maternal Health Reports

<i>The Guardian</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Favourable	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2 (40%)	6 (60%)
Neutral	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	4 (40%)
Unfavourable	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total (%)	2 (100%)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)

All maternal health reports in *The Guardian* for March and September were favourable (i.e. 100%) save that of April which was neutral (i.e. 100%). 60% accounted for favourable coverage of maternal health issues while the remainder 40% accounted for neutral coverage.

Table 4.2 – Slant of Maternal Health Reports

<i>The Punch</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Favourable	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	3 (60%)	4 (100%)	16 (88.9%)
Neutral	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	2 (11.1%)
Unfavourable	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total (%)	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	4 (100%)	18 (100%)

All maternal health reports in *The Punch* for March, April and December were favourable (i.e. 100%). Majority of *The Punch* maternal health reports were favourable (i.e. 88.9%) and the rest were neutral (i.e. 11.1%).

Table 4.3 – Slant of Maternal Health Reports

<i>Nigerian Tribune</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Favourable	5 (83.3%)	4 (66.7%)	4 (100%)	1 (33.3%)	14 (73.7%)
Neutral	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (66.7%)	5 (26.3%)
Unfavourable	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total (%)	6 (100%)	6 (100%)	4 (100%)	3 (100%)	19 (100%)

All maternal health reports in *Nigerian Tribune* for September were favourable (i.e. 100%). 73.7% accounted for favourable coverage of maternal health issues while the remainder 26.3% accounted for neutral coverage.

Majority of maternal health reports in the selected Nigerian newspapers were favourable (i.e. 76.6%) while the remainder 23.4% were neutral. None of the newspapers recorded any unfavourable maternal health report (i.e. 0%).

Research Question 5

What are the sources of maternal health reports in selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 5: SOURCES OF MATERNAL HEALTH REPORTS IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Year 2009	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	Total (%)
HPPS	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5.3%)	1 (2%)
HBNGO	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
MP	6 (60%)	8 (44.4%)	12 (63.1%)	26 (55%)
NAI	0 (0%)	3 (16.7%)	1 (5.3%)	4 (9%)
US	4 (40%)	7 (38.9%)	5 (26.3%)	16 (34%)
Total (%)	10 (100%)	18 (100%)	19 (100%)	47 (100%)

The Guardian generated maternal health reports from either media practitioners or unidentified sources within the study period. Most of the reports came from media practitioners (i.e. 60%) while the rest came from unidentified sources (i.e. 40%).

The Punch generated 44.4% of its maternal health reports from media practitioners, 38.9% from unidentified sources and the remainder 16.7% from News Agency/Internet sources, within the study period.

Nigerian Tribune generated 5.3% of its maternal health reports from health practitioner/personal sources, 63.1% from media practitioners, 5.3% from News Agency/Internet sources and the remainder 26.3% from unidentified sources, within the study period.

All three selected Nigerian newspapers have media practitioners (i.e. 55%) as their major source of maternal health coverage while unidentified sources (i.e. 34%), ranks as their next major source.

Research Question 6

What maternal mortality challenges/causes are reported in selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 6: MATERNAL MORTALITY CHALLENGES/CAUSES REPORTED IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Year 2009	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	Total (%)
HIV/AIDS	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (4%)
Eclampsia	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (8%)
Abortion	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (8%)
Infertility	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (4%)
OFS	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sepsis	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
CPID	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
PHI	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
POL	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (8%)
EP	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Malaria	0 (0%)	1 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Anaemia	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
KHLLD	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	1 (4%)
Poverty	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
LII	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Others	1 (100%)	4 (36.3%)	7 (53.8%)	12 (48%)
Total (%)	1 (100%)	11 (100%)	13 (100%)	25 (100%)

The Guardian gave only one (1) challenge/cause associated with maternal mortality, under the item 'others' within the timeframe of the study. *The Punch* gave the challenges/causes associated with maternal mortality as eclampsia, abortion, sepsis, postpartum hemorrhage/infection, prolonged obstructed labour, ectopic pregnancy, and malaria. The remainder of the maternal mortality challenges/causes recorded by *The Punch* came under the item 'others' within the timeframe of the study.

In its reports on maternal mortality, *Nigerian Tribune* gave the challenges/causes associated with maternal mortality as HIV/AIDS, eclampsia, abortion, infertility, prolonged obstructed labour, and kidney/heart/lung/liver disease. The remainder of the maternal mortality challenges/causes recorded by the *Nigerian Tribune* came under the item 'others' within the timeframe of the study.

Majority of the maternal mortality challenges/causes recorded in all three selected Nigerian newspapers came under the item 'others' (i.e. 48%), within the timeframe of the study.

Research Question 7

What are the forms of maternal health coverage in selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 7: FORMS OF MATERNAL HEALTH ISSUES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Year 2009	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	Total (%)
News	10 (100%)	15 (83.3%)	8 (42.1%)	33 (70.2%)
Feature/Opinion	0 (0%)	2 (11.1%)	9 (47.4%)	11 (23.4%)
Editorial	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Picture/Illustration	0 (0%)	1 (5.6%)	2 (10.5%)	3 (6.4%)
Advertorial/Interview	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total (%)	10 (100%)	18 (100%)	19 (100%)	47 (100%)

The Guardian devoted all its reports on maternal health issues to the news category (i.e. 100%) within the study timeframe. *The Punch* devoted most of its maternal health reports to the news category (i.e. 83.3%), more to the feature/opinion category (i.e. 11.1%) and the remainder to the picture/illustration category (i.e. 5.6%). *Nigerian Tribune* devoted most of its maternal health reports to the feature/opinion category (i.e.

47.4%), more to the news category (i.e. 42.1%) and the remainder to the picture/illustration category (i.e. 10.5%).

Most of maternal health reports in the selected Nigerian newspapers, within the study period, were devoted to the news category (i.e. 70.2%), more to the feature/opinion category (i.e. 23.4%), and the remainder to the picture/illustration category (i.e. 6.4%).

Research Question 8

What is the source category of maternal health issues in the selected Nigerian newspapers?

TABLE 8: SOURCE CATEGORIES OF MATERNAL HEALTH ISSUES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

Table 8.1 - Source Categories of Maternal Health Issues

<i>The Guardian</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Local Source	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	2 (40%)	5 (50%)
Foreign Source	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	3 (60%)	4 (40%)
Unidentified	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)
Total (%)	2 (100%)	1 (100%)	2 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)

The reports of *The Guardian* in March and April were all from local sources (i.e. 100%). In September, *The Guardian* had 50% local and 50% foreign maternal health reports whereas there was a higher percentage of foreign maternal health reports (i.e. 60%) and a lesser percentage (i.e. 40%) in December.

Table 8.2 – Source Categories of Maternal Health Reports

<i>The Punch</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Local Source	3 (100%)	3 (50%)	3 (60%)	2 (50%)	11 (61.1%)
Foreign Source	0 (0%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (40%)	2 (50%)	6 (33.3%)
Unidentified	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5.6%)
Total (%)	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	4 (100%)	18 (100%)

100% of maternal health issues reported in *The Punch* in March were from local sources. In April and September, most of the maternal health reports came from local sources (i.e. 50% and 60% respectively). In December, *The Punch* had 50% local and 50% foreign maternal health reports.

Table 8.3 – Source Categories of Maternal Health Reports

<i>Nigerian Tribune</i> 2009	March	April	September	December	Total (%)
Local Source	2 (40%)	5 (83.3%)	3 (60%)	1 (33.3%)	11 (57.9%)
Foreign Source	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	2 (66.7%)	5 (26.3%)
Unidentified	2 (40%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (15.8%)
Total (%)	5 (100%)	6 (100%)	5 (100%)	3 (100%)	19 (100%)

In March, April and September, majority of the maternal health reports came from local sources (i.e. 40%, 83.3% and 60% respectively). In December, *Nigerian Tribune* had more foreign than local maternal health reports (i.e. 66.7% and 33.3% respectively).

All three selected Nigerian newspapers- *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Nigerian Tribune*- generated most of their maternal health reports from foreign sources (i.e. 57.5%). More maternal health issues came from unidentified sources (i.e. 31.9%) and the remaining from local sources (i.e. 10.6%).

DISCUSSION

Research question one was aimed at exploring the frequency of maternal health coverage in selected Nigerian newspapers. The findings in table 1 make it obvious that all three Nigerian newspapers- *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune*- did a substantial amount of coverage on maternal health issues within the study timeframe.

Research question two aimed at investigating the maternal health aspect with the highest frequency in selected Nigerian newspapers. Table 2 illustrates that each of the selected Nigerian newspapers

concentrated their most of their attention to MCH while MMORT was the next maternal health aspect on their preference list. Akinjogbin & Oso (2007) observe that it is agenda-setting when the press is selective in reporting the news. Setting maternal mortality as an agenda for the public to think about would have been an uphill task for the Nigerian print media if they failed to give it the required attention in their coverage.

Research question three aimed at determining the prominence given to maternal health issues in selected Nigerian newspapers. The findings in tables 3.1-3.3 demonstrate the level of importance *The Guardian* and *The Punch* attached to maternal health issues, which both reported only on their inside pages. *Nigerian Tribune*, in table 3.3, reported some of its maternal health issues on the front page and centre spread. Bearing in mind the second-level agenda and object salience theory, how the Nigerian print media projects maternal health issues while setting them as the agenda for the public to think about is key. The Nigerian print media would need to make most of their reports on critical subjects such as maternal mortality appear less on the inside pages and more on other pages of their publications thus projecting the great importance of the subject matter (i.e. maternal mortality).

Research question four aimed at ascertaining the slant of maternal health reportage in selected Nigerian newspapers. Accountability to the public, which is one of the central themes of the social responsibility theory of the media, has been displayed in the selected Nigerian newspapers within the study timeframe, as given in tables 4.1– 4.3. Majority of maternal health reports in the selected Nigerian newspapers were favourable while the rest were neutral. The effort of Nigerian journalists is worthy of commendation at this juncture in that no single record on maternal health issues turned out unfavourable. It is also obvious that majority of the reports were properly framed and contextualized to drive home the right message to the audience on the subject matter in *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune*.

Research question five aimed at exploring the sources of maternal health reports in selected Nigerian newspapers. It is quite disturbing to note the high percentage of maternal health reports generated from unidentified sources in all three selected Nigerian newspapers within the study timeframe. This stands a chance of questioning the credibility of the information relayed in such maternal health reports with anonymous sources. Looking at table 5, none of the selected Nigerian newspapers for the study had a single report sourced from renowned health bodies/NGOs such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and so on. It is not enough for Nigerian media practitioners to generate reports on maternal health issues from their regular beat assignments; the print media industry need to liaise with at least one of the renowned health bodies/NGOs nationwide to spice up its report activity and further boost the salience on critical issues say maternal mortality. The role of such renowned health bodies/NGOs would be that of providing in-depth factual statements and accurate records of significant statistical figures related to maternal health topics covered in the print media.

Research question six aimed at investigating maternal mortality challenges/causes reported in selected Nigerian newspapers. One would have expected to see more of the medically-related challenges such as HIV/AIDS, ectopic pregnancy, anaemia, etc, reported in the selected Nigerian newspapers. However, it was quite a surprise to see that it majority of the reported challenges/causes came under the item 'others' within the timeframe of the study.

Research question seven aimed at ascertaining the forms of maternal health coverage in selected Nigerian newspapers. Using table 7, no maternal health report was recorded in the form of editorials and advertorials/interviews by *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *Nigerian Tribune*. Based on the concept of framing, from the perspective of Entman (2002), selecting an aspect of perceived reality- in this case maternal mortality- and making it more salient, to promote its proper definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation cannot be effectively achieved via news reporting alone; editorials would serve as a very vital backup for such purpose(s).

With the aid of editorials, the Nigerian print media can place maternal mortality within a field of meaning thus giving direction to the audience on how to think about the given agenda (i.e. maternal mortality). Interview reports on maternal health issues would also enhance public enlightenment in that notable individuals in society, for instance, the governor of a state, the chairman of a local government, the minister of health, and/or even those related to victims of maternal mortality can be contacted by the Nigerian print media industry. At this juncture, opportunity will be created for those that would want to enlighten the public on all there is to maternal mortality from their real life experience or to inform the

public on projects being carried out (of which the public must be a part) to address the topical issue on ground.

Research question eight aimed at determining the source category of maternal health issues in the selected Nigerian newspapers. It is obvious, from table 8.4, that the selected Nigerian newspapers got most of their maternal health reports from foreign sources and more from unidentified sources. As addressed in research question five, information without identifiable sources, should have their credibility questioned in order to serve as a check against unethical practices such as publishing falsehood, usually based on unfounded facts.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Most of the reports on maternal mortality in the selected Nigerian newspapers, within the study period, had a favourable coverage but were not projected in forms i.e. editorials and interviews that would enhance the salience of the subject matter- maternal mortality. Nigerian journalists need not rely on news virtually all the time (as seen previously in the case of *The Guardian* and *The Punch*) in disseminating topical issues of interest, as far as maternal mortality is concerned.

It is particularly important that health reporters in the Nigerian media industry liaise with health experts to unveil detailed circumstances surrounding health development issues such as maternal mortality. With Nigerian journalists paying attention to providing the public with accurate information in their straight news and/or specialized reports, reference can be made to such media reports for generating standard health policy frameworks now and in future.

When the Nigerian print media constantly feature government officials – health commissioners, health ministers, local government chairmen, commissioners for works and housing, etc- on special pages of their regular publications, the federal government would readily take interest on such critical issues being raised and would not hesitate to formulate as well as implement health policies that incorporate probable solutions to such issues.

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